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B.C.

Milestones
in the
Progress
of the
Hudson's Bay
Company

15-



Foundation



To King Charles II at Oxford comes Sir George Carteret, bringing with him two bearded *coureurs de bois* from Canada. He begs leave to present them—Medard Chouart, Sieur des Groseilliers, and Pierre Esprit Radisson. Disgusted with their treatment at the hands of the French Government, these men have brought to His Majesty a profitable scheme for tapping the vast beaver wealth of the Canadian North.

The King questions them, learns of the great fur-bearing country around Henry Hudson's Bay. He learns, too, that these sturdy adventurers have spent many years, living and travelling in the wilderness, and trading with the Indians. They offer to lead an expedition for trading into Hudson's Bay, by way of Hudson's Strait, if the King's friends will finance a company to carry it on.

His Majesty is definitely interested, and sends them to Prince Rupert, at Windsor. Rupert agrees to form a company, but because of the war with Holland, not until 1668 is an expedition fitted out by the Governor and Company of Adventurers of England Trading into Hudson's Bay.



*Charles II learns of the beaver wealth of
Hudson's Bay*

Incorporation



The first trading expedition has succeeded. On the little ketch *Nonsuch*, Des Groseilliers and Captain Gillam of New England have won through the ice of Hudson's Strait to the Bay, and have built Fort Charles at the mouth of Rupert's River. From there they have brought back a costly cargo of furs for the ladies and gallants of London.

With the proof of success before him, King Charles agrees to sanction Rupert's company, and on 2nd May, 1670, he confers upon it a Royal Charter of Incorporation. By the terms of this charter, the Company of Adventurers is given the monopoly of trade in all the lands, rivers, and straits which they may discover through Hudson's Strait. Nobody at the time knows the extent of the grant, but in time it comes to embrace the whole watershed of Hudson's Strait and Bay.

From Fort Charles, a chain of posts is flung around the shores of James and Hudson's Bays. The fur trade prospers, and every year the Company sends a ship through the Strait to take in trading goods and bring back furs.



The King grants a charter to the Hudson's Bay Company

Battles on the Bay



The English trade in Hudson's Bay soon begins to divert part of the stream of furs that forms the life blood of New France. The Indians are lured away from the French posts by better and more attractive goods, and the Governor at Quebec sees that drastic measures must be taken. From land and sea, picked French fighting men attack the traders at the lonely seacoast forts. Hudson's Bay resounds with the exploits of the Le Moyne brothers of Montreal. Moose River, Fort Charles, Albany River, and York Factory fall to the invaders. Garrisons surrender and are driven out to perish in the snowy wilderness. Back come the English and storm the forts again. Sometimes the cross of St. George floats above the scarred log bastions, sometimes the lilies of France. Le Moyne D'Iberville, scourge of the Bay, trounces three British ships with his one, then goes ashore and takes York Factory.

At last, the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713 puts an end to the fighting, and the following year, armed with a commission from Queen Anne, Company officers take over all forts on the Bay that are still held by the French.



The French attack one of the forts on Hudson's Bay

Westward Exploration



With the object of encouraging the Indians to bring their furs to the Bay, scores of one-man expeditions are sent out into the West with returning

Indians who have come down to trade. First to voyage into the interior is Henry Kelsey, a young apprentice who in 1690 travels from York Factory into what is now Saskatchewan with a band of Assiniboine Indians. Two years later he returns, bringing with him a flotilla of Indian canoes laden with furs.

Wars with the French interfere with further expeditions for several years. Then La Verendrye from Montreal penetrates to the prairies, and builds a series of forts across the trade routes to the Bay.

To meet this new threat, an expedition is sent west under Anthony Henday, in 1754. He travels as far as the Blackfoot country, meeting some French traders on the Saskatchewan who have come by canoe from the St. Lawrence. In the succeeding twenty years, no less than sixty expeditions are sent into the interior by the Company, to bring the Indians down to trade.



*Anthony Henday travels westward to the
Blackfoot country*

Westward Penetration



Canada has surrendered at Montreal to General Amherst, and for a few years the men of the Hudson's Bay Company can enjoy their monopoly of trade, unhampered by the French. But soon a new menace arises. Guided by the hardy Canadian *voyageurs* a flood of shrewd, bold, reckless traders is surging westwards from Montreal.

These men think no more of the perils and hardships of a fifteen-hundred-mile canoe journey, than they do of the legal rights of a royally chartered company. Following the practice of the French, they build a chain of forts into the very hunting grounds of the Indians, and divert the stream of furs down the Upper Lakes to the St. Lawrence.

There is only one way to combat this opposition, and in 1774 Samuel Hearne, recently returned from his discovery of the overland route to the Arctic Ocean, is sent west to build the Company's first fort in the interior—Cumberland House, near the Saskatchewan. From there a network of forts and trade routes spreads out over Rupert's Land and the rich fur country of the Athabasca.



*The building of Cumberland House, first
Company post in the interior*

First Settlement



The problem of feeding the fur brigades that travel the inland waterways, leads to the establishment of the first farming settlement on the Canadian prairies. Lord Selkirk, philanthropic Scottish peer, has bought up a large share of the Company's stock, and on condition that he will plant a colony of farmers on the Red River, has been granted a hundred and sixteen thousand square miles of territory around the south end of Lake Winnipeg.

His first settlers arrive at York Factory in 1811, and next year begin a settlement where Winnipeg now stands. More groups follow, to be received with mixed feelings by the fur traders. The "pedlars" from Montreal, who by now have formed themselves into the powerful North-West Company, become hostile.

Selkirk, however, legally fortified by the power of the Royal Charter, stands firm on his rights. Crop failures compel the settlers to seek a large part of their food supply in the roving herds of buffalo, and in 1814, the governor of the colony boldly prohibits the export of dried buffalo meat from the great area owned by Selkirk.



*Scottish farmers settle at the forks of the Red
and Assiniboine Rivers*

Strife in the Wilderness



The Red River is a long way from London, and the Nor'westers, who have always depended on the buffalo meat of that region to feed their voyageurs, blandly ignore the embargo. A warrant for the arrest of the colony's governor, charged with illegal seizure of food, is issued. While he is taken to trial at Fort William, the Nor'westers at nearby Fort Gibraltar rouse the half-breeds against the settlers. In 1815, organized vandalism is let loose, and the terrified farmers flee.

At last the Great Company is aroused. In Montreal, stronghold of the Canadian Company, Colin Robertson recruits a shock brigade of a hundred voyageurs and takes them via the Great Lakes to Lake Winnipeg. Under his protection the settlers return to their farms and Robertson proceeds to seize Fort Gibraltar, as well as the express canoe from Montreal, thus discovering plans for the destruction of the Red River Settlement. Finally in June, 1816, a climax is reached, when seventy mounted half-breeds in the pay of the North-West Company attack a party of settlers at Seven Oaks, and massacre Governor Semple and twenty others.



*North West Company half-breeds attack the
Red River settlers*

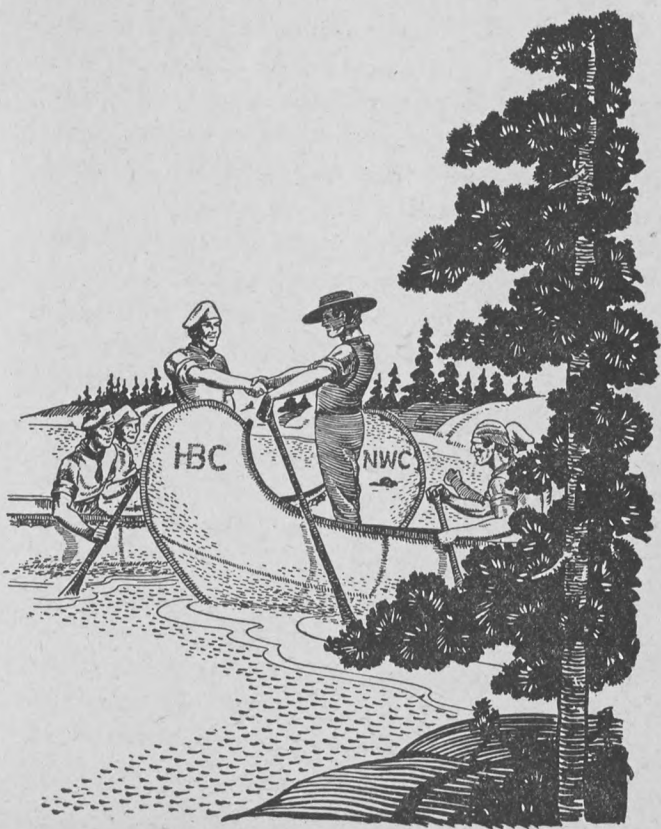
Union



In 1820, George Simpson is sent out from the London Office to take charge of the Company's business in Canada, in case the resident governor should be arrested by the Northwesters. With cool courage, he leads a successful campaign against the Montrealers in far Athabasca.

But now the struggle is in its closing stages. Negotiations are under way in London for the union of the two companies. William and Simon McGillivray go over to represent the Montreal partners; Dr. John McLoughlin and Angus Bethune to represent the disgruntled wintering partners. The upshot of the deliberations is that in March, 1821, the two great companies unite under the name of the Hudson's Bay Company.

Nicholas Garry, Deputy Governor of the Company, is sent out to supervise the distribution of chief factors and chief traders among the posts in Canada. Travelling in a great semi-circle, he leaves Montreal in the spring, reaches the Red River in the summer and sails from York Factory in the fall, leaving behind him the beginnings of a strongly united company.



Foes become friends

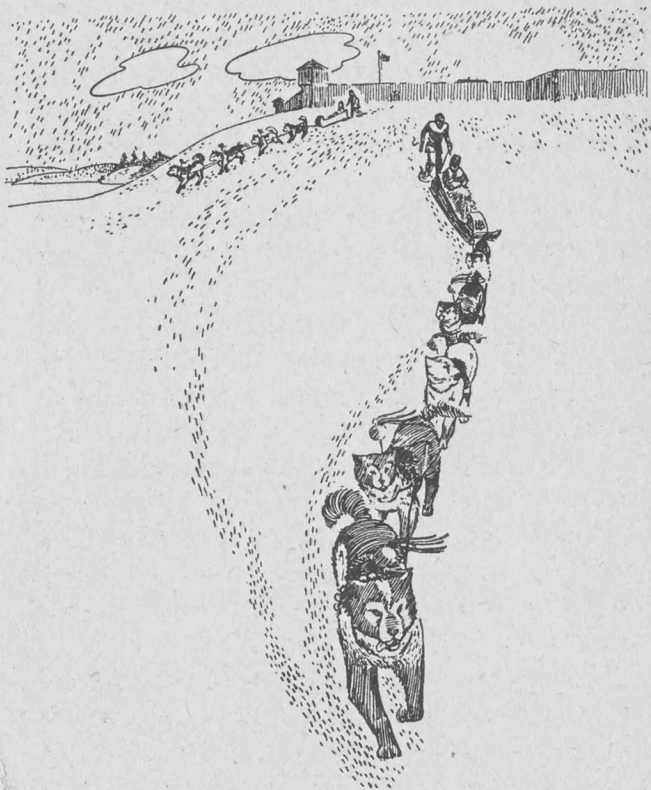
Expansion



By an Act of Parliament, the trade monopoly of the new Hudson's Bay Company is expanded to include not only Rupert's Land, but also the rest of the Indian and Eskimo territories east of the Rocky Mountains. At the same time, in the territory west of the Rockies, it is granted sole right of British trade.

George Simpson is made governor of the huge Northern Department, and later Governor-in-Chief of all the Company's territories in America. Under his brilliant direction and driving power, the Company expands mightily. He himself travels continually from fort to fort welding the rival factions into one smoothly functioning machine.

In this task he is ably supported by a remarkable group of chief factors and chief traders. It is these men who establish the traditions of courage and loyalty and fair dealing which ennoble the service of the Hudson's Bay Company. Penetrating into the unknown wilderness among fierce tribes of Indians, they form the spearhead of civilization in the Canadian West.



*Company officers leaving Fort Edmonton by
carriole*

To the Pacific

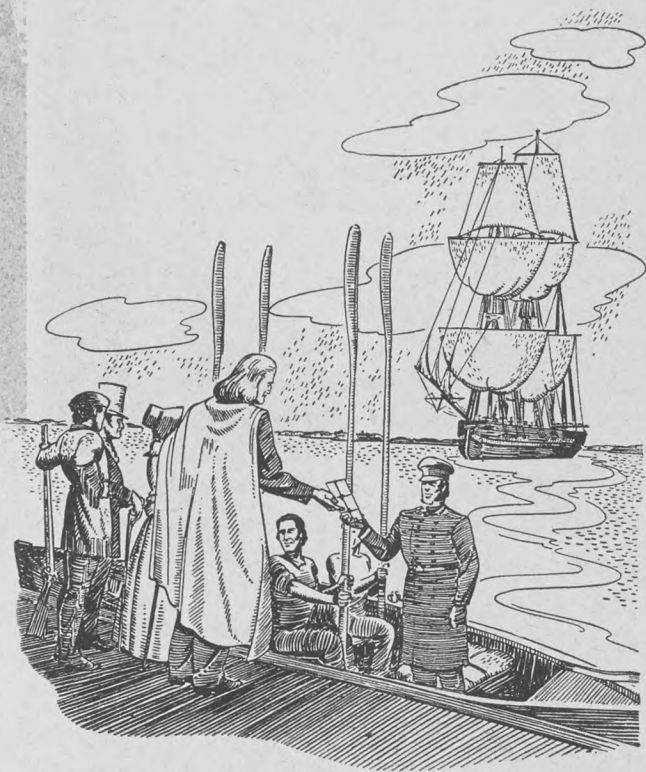


Up to 1824, the fur trade of the Pacific Coast has been carried on almost entirely by eastern Americans from coastwise ships. Chief Factor

Dr. John McLoughlin is put in charge of the huge Columbia District with headquarters at Fort Vancouver on the north bank of the Columbia. This fertile spot is selected so that it may become a centre of food supply for other forts on the Pacific.

More forts follow, stretching up the coast to Russian America—now Alaska. From the United States, independent parties arrive to share in the wealth of the Pacific North-West. The first settlers, Methodist missionaries, are welcomed at Fort Vancouver in 1834 and establish a mission near by. These form the vanguard of the great army of settlers which will one day populate the country around the Columbia River.

In time, it becomes evident that the Americans, through sheer weight of numbers will claim the territory north, as well as south of the Columbia River; and in 1843, Fort Victoria is built by James Douglas, as the new headquarters of the district.



*McLoughlin at Fort Vancouver receives letters
from London by the HBC barque Columbia*

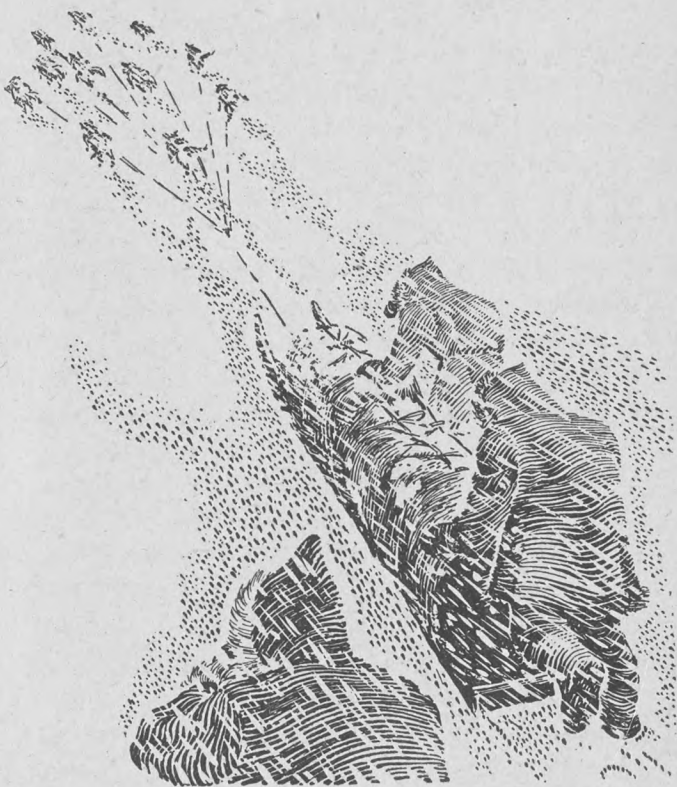
To the Arctic



The Company also sends out its officers to explore the far northwest and the Arctic. Gradually, as they push farther and farther along the river highways into the unknown, the map of northern Canada begins to take shape. McLeod explores the Liard, Black the Finlay, Bell crosses the mountains from the Mackenzie to the Yukon, Murray follows his route and builds Fort Yukon in Russian territory, Campbell discovers the Pelly and follows it downstream to Murray's fort.

Meanwhile, the naval explorers, Captains Franklin and Back, have mapped a great deal of the Arctic coastline. But great gaps remain, and Company officers are sent north to complete the discoveries. Dease and Simpson push westwards as far as Point Barrow, and eastwards beyond King William Land. Rae, on the first of his five Arctic expeditions, explores the coastline east of that, and afterwards discovers more territory in his search for the lost Franklin party.

Most of these expeditions result in new trading forts. But the Arctic is still considered too remote to repay the cost of trading there.



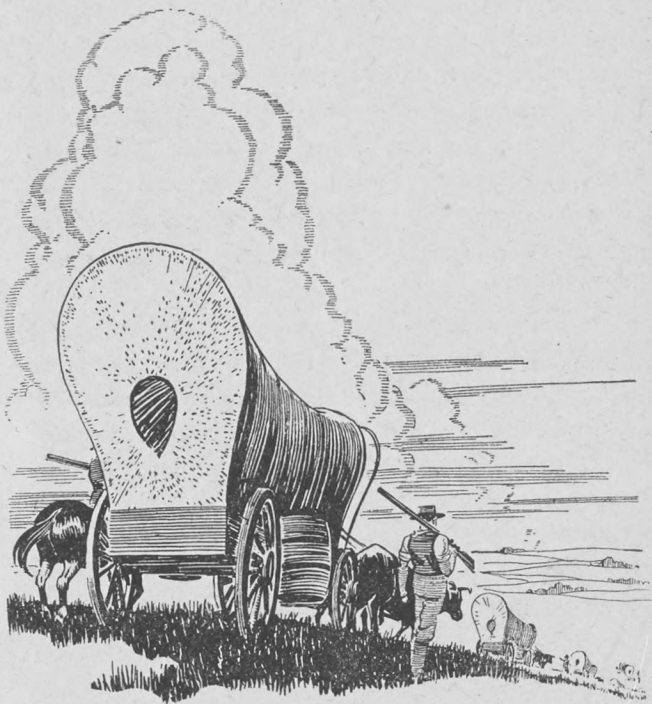
Company officers explore the Arctic coastline

Surrender of the West



The Company's monopoly of trade is due to be renewed in 1858. But eastern Canadians are clamoring for admittance to the great Fertile Belt of the prairies. An appeal for redress is made to the British Government and as a result, a parliamentary committee is set up in 1857 to enquire into the situation. The committee recommends that the Red River and Saskatchewan districts be ceded to Canada, when she is able to cope with them, but that in those parts where settlement is unfeasible, the Company should remain in control.

Ten years later, provision is made for the eventual admission of Rupert's Land and the Northwest Territories to the new Dominion of Canada. In 1869, the Company surrenders its two-hundred-year hold on Rupert's Land, in exchange for £300,000 and some seven million acres of land in the Fertile Belt. But the half-breeds of the Red River Colony refuse to yield their hereditary lands to the incoming strangers, and rise up in revolt. When peace has been brought about, a stream of settlers begins to pour into the virgin acres of the West.



Settlers come to the Canadian West

Adaptation



With the influx of settlers, the frontier of the fur trade is thrown back. But the old Company adapts itself with vigour to changing condi-

tions. Villages, such as Winnipeg and Edmonton and Victoria, grow up around some of the fur trade posts, and these posts are converted into retail stores to supply the needs of the growing population. Basing their policy on the Company's far-reaching reputation for goods of the finest quality, the stores keep step with their communities as they grow from villages into towns and cities.

Railways cross the prairies and the mountains, bringing an ever-increasing flood of immigrants. A Land Department is set up to administer the sale of the Company's share in the Fertile Belt, and 350,000 acres are sold in one year alone. A Wholesale Department is created to distribute the blankets and tobacco and tea which through two centuries of fur trading have become famous throughout the West. The fur trade itself, far from retiring into semi-obscurity, expands into new fields, and in the early years of the twentieth century reaches out to establish posts in the treeless regions of the Eskimo.



*The Company's Winnipeg store rises from old
Fort Garry*

The Company To-day



To-day, all these departments carry on business with their headquarters in Hudson's Bay House, Winnipeg, where the Canadian Committee directs their activities.

The Land Department is still actively selling its farm lands, now amounting to a million and a half acres, which remain from the original seven million. It also holds the mineral rights in four and a half million acres, which include a number of producing coal mines and oil wells.

The Wholesale Department distributes the famous Hudson's Bay "Point" blankets, tobacco, tea and coffee, "Good Spirits," and Birds Eye Frosted Foods; and it also operates tea and coffee plants at Winnipeg and Vancouver.

The Retail Stores Department operates great department stores in Victoria, Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary, Saskatoon and Winnipeg, and eight smaller stores from the Rockies to the Lower St. Lawrence.

The Fur Trade has over two hundred posts stretching from sea to sea. Ninety-six of them are equipped with short-wave radio, and eleven of these send daily weather reports to the Government. In addition to its posts, the Fur Trade operates R.M.S. *Nascopie*, the famous Eastern Arctic supply ship; four motor schooners; innumerable dog-teams, canoes and small boats; and, in the Macken-



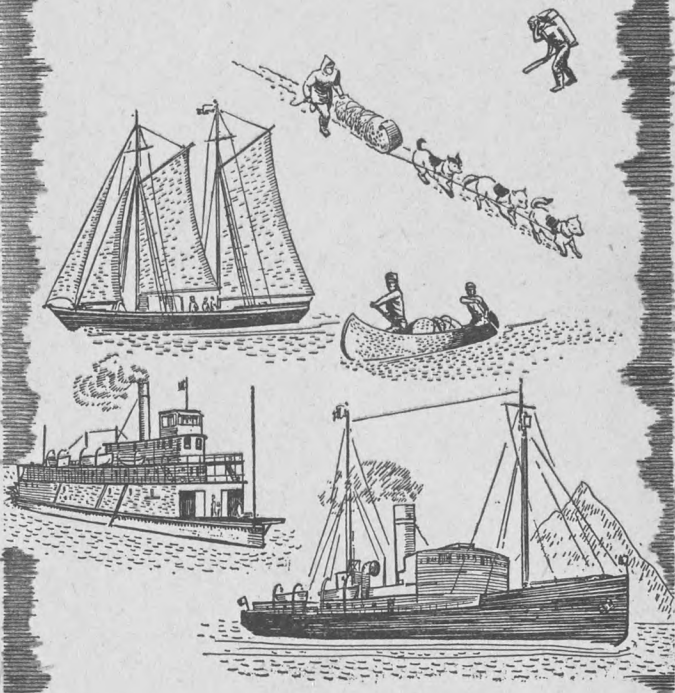
*Land Department, Wholesale Department
 (Point blankets, tea and coffee, "Good Spirits")
 Raw Fur Department, and Retail Stores
 Department (Edmonton Store)*

zie Area, four stern-wheelers, ten tugs, and thirty barges. The Fur Trade also has four beaver sanctuaries, three muskrat preserves, and an experimental fur farm. The Raw Fur Department operates eight branches where furs are bought from other sources.

The headquarters of the Company as a whole remains in London, where it has been since the foundation, and where the Governor and Committee determine all matters of principle and policy. There, from 1672 to 1940, all the raw furs collected by the Company in Canada were sold at auction. In that year, however, the Company fur sales were transferred to New York, where they are handled by Lampson, Fraser & Huth, Inc., one of H B C's wholly-owned subsidiaries.

The Company is still trading into Hudson's Bay, and it is still a company of adventurers. The royally granted monopoly is a thing of the past. But the modern world of competitive commerce, as well as the rigours of the wilderness, call for the qualities of the adventurer no less than did the unexplored continent of Rupert's time.

The Hudson's Bay Company to-day, in fact, is a vital, forward-looking organization. For its traditions, built up by the men who have served it during two and three-quarter centuries, are the traditions of youth—progress and adaptability, courage and initiative. These have enabled it to survive the trials and adversities of the years, and to emerge from each encounter with new strength and new confidence in the future.



*Transportation in the Fur Trade. (M.S. Fort
Severn, S.S. Distributor, R.M.S. Nascopie)*

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